

Title 26, §1419-A, Specialized customer communications equipment for persons with disabilities

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§1419-A. Specialized customer communications equipment for persons with disabilities

1. Money for specialized customer telecommunications equipment.

[2003, c. 553, Pt. A, §3 (rp).]

2. Communications Equipment Fund. There is established the Communications Equipment Fund to be used by the Division of Deafness within the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services. The fund is nonlapsing. The fund receives money transferred by the Public Utilities Commission from the universal service fund pursuant to Title 35-A, section 7104. The Division of Deafness may accept gifts or grants, including, but not limited to, federal grants, for the purposes of this section. Funds transferred from the universal service fund pursuant to Title 35-A, section 7104 and all gifts and grants and authorized appropriations must be deposited in the Communications Equipment Fund and disbursed in accordance with this section. The Communications Equipment Fund may be used for purchase, lease, distribution, upgrading, installation, maintenance and repair of specialized customer communications equipment for deaf, hard-of-hearing or speech-impaired persons and persons with disabilities and for training in the use of such equipment, except that funds received for the purposes of subsection 6 pursuant to Title 35-A, section 7104 may be used only in accordance with subsection 6. The Division of Deafness may draw on the Communications Equipment Fund in accordance with the communications equipment plan required under subsection 3.

[2005, c. 336, §1 (amd).]

3. Communications equipment plan. The Division of Deafness shall develop a plan to make specialized customer communications equipment available to deaf, hard-of-hearing or speech-impaired persons and persons with disabilities and to distribute money from the Communications Equipment Fund. The plan must be developed by the Division of Deafness annually, not later than January 1st, in accordance with the rule-making procedures in Title 5, chapter 375. The plan must provide for the expenditure of money from the Communications Equipment Fund for the benefit of deaf, hard-of-hearing or speech-impaired persons and persons with disabilities for the purchase, lease, distribution, upgrading, installation, maintenance and repair of specialized customer communications equipment capable of serving their needs and may provide for expenditures for training in the use of such equipment. Persons who are profoundly deaf or speech-impaired or who have a disability so that they are unable to use the telephone for expressive or receptive communications, as verified by a written report from an otologist, an audiologist or a physician, are eligible for assistance from the Communications Equipment Fund. The plan must ensure that persons with disabilities have access to appropriate specialized customer communications equipment to meet their individual needs. The plan must include specific criteria that govern the priorities assigned to various persons who need this equipment. The criteria must take into account household income, degree of impairment, need for emergency communications, living arrangements and other factors determined relevant by the Division of Deafness. In developing the criteria, the Division of Deafness shall consult with the advisory council established in section 1413-C and other advisory councils representing the interests of persons with disabilities.

[2003, c. 553, Pt. A, §3 (amd).]

4. Specialized customer communications equipment needs in public school system. The Department of Education, in consultation with the Maine Educational Center for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing and the Governor Baxter School for the Deaf and advocacy groups for deaf and hard-of-hearing persons and for the information technology interests of consumers, shall conduct an annual survey of all public schools in the State for the purpose of assessing the need for specialized customer communications equipment in the school system and report its findings to the joint standing committee of the Legislature having jurisdiction over labor matters. The report must include: the number of deaf and hard-of-hearing students and their needs for specialized customer communications equipment; the availability of specialized customer communications equipment; the number of requests for specialized customer communications

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equipment; and the status of training for teachers and other school personnel in the use of specialized customer communications equipment.

[2005, c. 279, §16 (amd).]

5. Assessment on telecommunications carriers.

[2003, c. 553, Pt. A, §3 (rp).]

6. Emergency alert telecommunications service. A person who has been certified by the Division of Deafness as being deaf or hard-of-hearing and has an income of less than 135% of the federal poverty level must receive a discount of up to \$10 per month in the service charge for any wireless communications device or 2-way pager that is used to receive emergency alerts issued by any state or federal agency. Such a person must receive a \$10 discount except when the service charge for the wireless communications device or 2-way pager is less than \$10 per month, in which case the person must receive a discount equal to the service charge for the wireless communications device or 2-way pager. A company required to provide the discount is entitled to recover amounts discounted from the Communications Equipment Fund established in subsection 2. The Bureau of Rehabilitation Services shall adopt rules to establish the process for certifying eligibility with the Division of Deafness and for the process to be used by wireless and paging companies in recovering discounted revenue from the Communications Equipment Fund. Administrative costs associated with implementing this subsection may be paid from funds provided to the Communications Equipment Fund for the purposes of this subsection pursuant to Title 35-A, section 7104. Rules adopted pursuant to this subsection are routine technical rules as defined in Title 5, chapter 375, subchapter 2-A.

[2005, c. 336, §2 (new).]

PL 1995, Ch. 560, §F13 (NEW).

PL 1997, Ch. 751, §A4 (AMD).

PL 1999, Ch. 227, §1,2 (AMD).

PL 2003, Ch. 553, §A3 (AMD).

PL 2005, Ch. 279, §16 (AMD).

PL 2005, Ch. 336, §1,2 (AMD).